

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 6, 2022
TO: Story County Planning and Zoning Commission
FROM: Amelia Schoeneman, Story County Planning and Development Director
RE: Ames Urban Fringe Plan Renewal and Amendment

Background

The [Ames Urban Fringe Plan](#) (AUFPP) is a cooperative planning effort between the City of Ames, City of Gilbert, and Story County. It provides guidelines for understanding and predicting future land uses within two miles outside the boundary of the City of Ames. While this is the area under state code where cities have extraterritorial subdivision review authority, it is also the area where land-use decisions have direct impacts on the ability of cities to grow efficiently and where rural development can accelerate the loss of farmland, natural areas, and the rural character of the area.

The AUFPP includes principles for various land use designations, as shown on a corresponding Land Use Frame Work Map. The land use designations also fall under either the jurisdiction of the city, county, or both for review of subdivision requests. In some land use designations, annexation is required prior to development. In others, development is intentionally limited to protect the county's rural character while allowing for orderly and efficient city growth.

Story County has adopted the AUFPP as a component of its comprehensive plan and uses the plan to guide land-use decisions, just as we would use the Cornerstone to Capstone (C2C) Plan in other areas of Story County.

Current Amendment Process

To implement the Ames Urban Fringe Plan, the Story County Board of Supervisors, along with the City Councils from Ames and Gilbert, entered into the [Ames Urban Fringe Joint and Cooperative Agreement](#), an intergovernmental 28E agreement to define roles and responsibilities related to development in the Ames Urban Fringe. The 28E is set to expire in summer of this year. With the upcoming expiration, the cooperators determined that a comprehensive update to the AUFPP was also needed.

In January, the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Supervisors took action on the county's priorities for the AUFPP amendment. The City of Ames and Gilbert also had similar conversations. With this direction, Planning and Development staff have been working closely with Ames Planning and Housing staff to draft new land use designations. These designations form the base of the plan. Staff has also discussed several of the designations with the City of Gilbert and is looking forward to working with Gilbert to map their future growth areas in the coming months.

While there are other general policies to be developed to address the cooperators' priorities for the AUFPP update, staff wanted to bring the draft land use designations forward to the commission for their review and feedback. Staff will then bring the draft land use designations to the Board of Supervisors for direction to create a formal draft for public outreach and comment.

Each of the designations described below can be found on the [interactive, draft Land Use Frame Work Map](#). A map is also included in Appendix A.

Staff asks the commission to specifically focus on the following priorities determined by the commission and Story County Board of Supervisors for the AUPF amendment to guide their review of the land use designations:

- Focus housing growth within existing municipal boundaries or in newly annexed areas where development of a variety of housing types is possible.
- Development in Ames' Urban Growth Area should be required to be annexed and meet full city standards.
- Map the Ames' Urban Reserve, including the Story County Study Area, as Agriculture and Farm Service to preserve the area.
- Reassess existing residential developments that the city does not foresee annexing and the amount of undeveloped rural residential-designated area. This includes siting or allowing intensification of rural residential areas based on Minimum Levels of Service (MLS) requirements to ensure that adequate public facilities and services are available, or can be provided, including access to paved roads, fire service, rural water, common wastewater treatment, and broadband. Also, encourage clustering of development and conservation design standards to protect prime agricultural land and natural areas.
- Establish density maximums for rural residential development and development in Agriculture and Farm Service-designated areas.
- Locate new commercial and industrial uses within existing municipal boundaries or in newly annexed areas except for those activities strongly interrelated with agricultural uses. Consider if policies to limit the intensity of current rural commercial and industrial uses are needed.
- Continue to limit the intensity of certain agribusiness uses.
- Assess the compatibility of certain conditional uses with the various AUPF land use designations.
- Discourage development in the floodplain and natural areas.

Draft Land Use Designations

The proposed designations, which cooperator has review jurisdiction, what uses are permitted, and other standards are described in more detail on the following pages. A brief summary of the designations and how they differ from the current AUPF is included below.

Staff is proposing four base designations—the Agriculture and Farm Service, Rural Residential—Existing, Rural Residential—Expansion, and Urban Growth.

The **Agriculture and Farm Service** designation is largely the same as the current designation in the AUPF. The county has review authority over the area. Most areas are zoned A-1 Agricultural and 35-acres are required to construct a dwelling. In the current AUPF, only farmsteads may be divided from the remaining farmland onto a parcel one net-acre or greater in size. Staff has relaxed this standard in the proposed designation to allow parcels meeting LESA to be divided or a one-lot residential parcel subdivision to occur if a density of one unit per 35-acres is maintained. The remaining land is not

considered buildable for a second dwelling. This allows smaller lot sizes but does not affect the density of the area.

The **Rural Residential—Existing** designation is a new designation that applies to existing residential developments. It allows existing lots to be divided once into two buildable parcels if zoning and other standards are met. These types of divisions are currently allowed in the AUPF; however, the City of Ames may have joint review authority with the county and there are additional density requirements. Since the designation applies to existing, built-out developments, these types of divisions were not common. An increase in these types of divisions is not anticipated. The county has sole review authority over these areas.

The **Rural Residential—Expansion** designation would allow new, rural residential development. It is similar to the existing rural residential designation in that a one-acre minimum lot size or equivalent density is required and the county has review jurisdiction over the area. However, staff has intentionally chosen not to map any area in this designation and instead provide standards for where and when the expansion of rural residential development *may* be appropriate.

The **Urban Growth** designation encompasses the designations that were previously under the Urban Service Area Land Use Class, including Urban Residential, Commercial Nodes, and Planned Industrial. These are areas where city growth is planned and can be supported in the short term. Instead of differentiating between these urban land uses, staff instead made one designation. The city retains review jurisdiction in these areas and annexation is required prior to development. Specific, planned future land use types can be found in the city's comprehensive plan.

Staff is also proposing several overlay designations that may apply further restrictions or standards to the base designations.

The **Urban Reserve Overlay** is a new designation designed to ensure efficient and orderly city growth beyond the AUPF's planning horizon and prevent premature rural development. This designation applies to certain land in the Agriculture and Farm Services designation where a city could provide future city infrastructure, including waste treatment by gravity flow. Given that the area may support long-term urban growth, and is where significant rural development pressure may occur without certain safeguards, there are additional restrictions applied by the overlay.

The **Environmentally Sensitive Overlay** is similar to the current Natural Areas designation. It indicates where environmentally sensitive areas are located and applies certain related restrictions on developments.

The **Subsurface Mining Overlay and Airport Protection Overlay** are also similar to those existing designations in the AUPF. These overlays assist in indicating locations where existing activities may present conflicts with certain proposed land uses.

Agriculture and Farm Service

Description

These areas encompass large areas of highly valuable farmland, with farming and agricultural production as the primary activity. They may also include other large, undeveloped tracts of land. Existing dwellings on previously created parcels under 35-acres in size may be included in this designation. Dwellings in this designation are limited to existing homes, new dwellings built on legally established lots of record, or to areas where a maximum density of one unit per 35 net acres can be achieved.

Annexation

Cities shall not review annexation requests in this area until such time that the AUP has been amended to designate the area to be annexed as an Urban Growth Area or in an Urban Reserve Overlay.

Divisions

In these areas, cities agree to waive the exercise of their extra-territorial subdivision authority.

Divisions for the creation of new development lots are not permitted. Parcels 35 net acres or greater in size may be divided once for the purpose of constructing a dwelling on a parcel between one and five net acres if permitted by county zoning requirements (e.g., through farmstead, LESA, or residential parcel subdivision exceptions). The remaining land shall not be considered buildable for a dwelling and preserved as an outlot through a deed or by other restriction.

Divisions reconfiguring agricultural lands or other undeveloped tracts of land for natural resource preservation are permitted.

Compatible Zoning Districts

The A-1 Agricultural and A-2 Agribusiness Districts may be considered compatible with the Agriculture and Farm Service designation. However, agribusiness uses shall be strategically located in order to:

- utilize existing adequate access and road capacity and otherwise assure the existence of adequate public facilities;
- protect productive soils and environmental resources;
- support the continued use of these areas for farming and agricultural production.

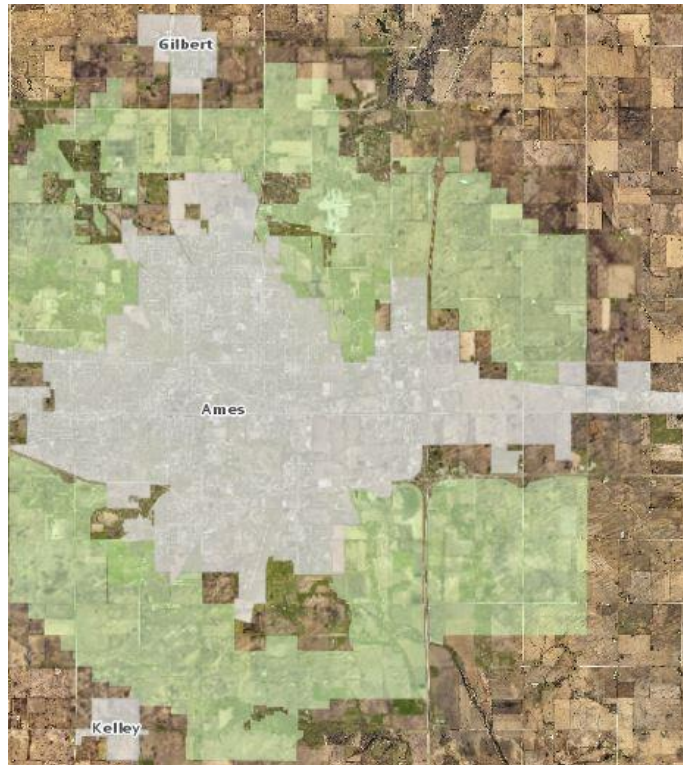


Figure 1: Draft Map of Agriculture and Farm Service Areas

Further, the county shall limit the intensity of the storage, retail, wholesale marketing, or processing of agricultural productions into value-added agricultural products through conditional rezoning agreements as these uses may be more appropriate to be located in commercial or industrial areas inside city boundaries with other similar manufacturing and processing uses.

Rural Residential—Existing

Description

These areas may include existing rural subdivisions or clusters of dwellings with lots between one-half and five acres in size, which are zoned residential. They are typically located on privately maintained roads or access easements.

Annexations

Cities shall not review annexation requests in this area until such times the AUP has been amended to designate the property as an Urban Growth Area or in an Urban Reserve Overlay.

Divisions

In these areas, cities agree to waive the exercise of their extra-territorial subdivision authority.

In the case that county zoning and subdivision requirements, including standards for roads and dwellings off access easements, can be met, a division for the creation of one additional buildable lot may be permitted. For lots already platted as part of a subdivision, this shall only be allowed if not otherwise prohibited by conditions on the platting.

Compatible Zoning Districts

These areas may include parcels in the A-R Agricultural Residential, R-1 Transitional Residential, and R-2 Urban Residential Zoning Districts.

Other Standards

A dwelling may be built on an undeveloped lot in an area designated as Rural Residential if county zoning standards and standards for roads or dwellings off access easements are met.

Individual wastewater systems and wells are permitted.

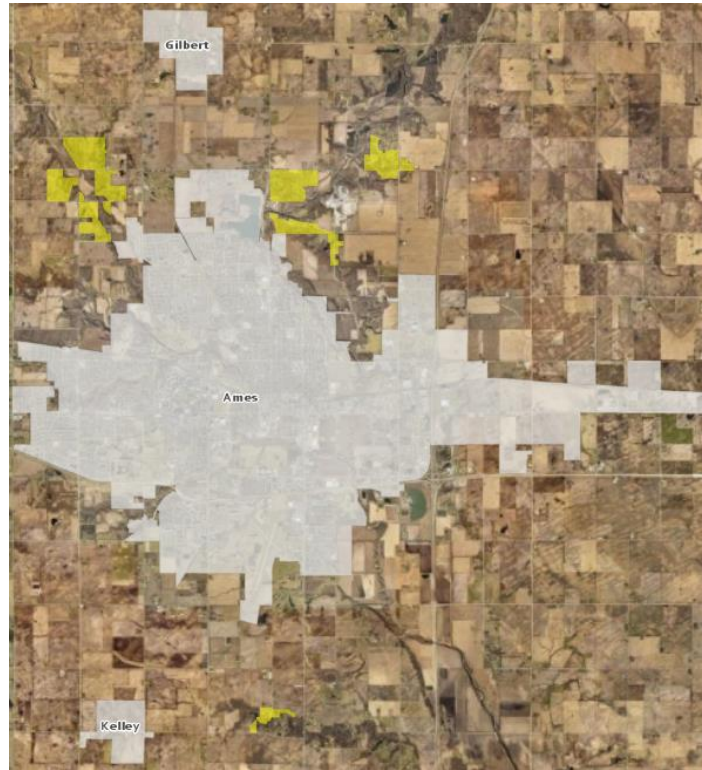


Figure 2: Draft Map of Rural Residential Areas

Rural Residential—Expansion

Description

These areas may permit new rural residential subdivisions; however, they are to be located on a case-by-case basis through an Ames Urban Fringe Plan amendment process. While it is recognized that there is demand for rural housing market choices, the amount of land in this designation shall be purposefully limited in order to focus housing growth in Story County within existing municipal boundaries or in newly annexed areas. It is estimated that approximately 60 new dwellings are needed in this designation over the next 20 years. To this end, the number of lots in a proposed development may be limited. Further, developers may be required to install required public road improvements or other infrastructure at their own expense.

Standards for Amendment

The following standards shall be met in order for an Ames Urban Fringe Plan amendment application to the Rural Residential Expansion Area to be accepted for further consideration. *Satisfaction of the following standards does not guarantee approval of the request.*

The area is adjacent to a rural residential area or rural residential expansion area developed after the adoption of the Ames Urban Fringe Plan.

The area is currently designated Agriculture and Farm Service and not located in an Urban Growth Area or Urban Reserve Overlay.

No more than 40 acres of land in agricultural production may be requested to be amended to this designation as part of an amendment request.

The area is located on a paved road(s). If an area is within a quarter-mile of a paved road, it may be considered; however, the developer may be required to pave to the development's access at their expense.

The amount of previously approved Rural Residential Expansion area shall be considered when granting an amendment, as well as the primacy of a proposed location versus the existence of other areas that exceed the above standards.

Annexations

Cities shall not review annexation requests until such times the plan has been amended to designate the property as an Urban Growth Area or in an Urban Reserve Overlay.

Divisions

In these areas, cities generally agree to waive the exercise of their extra-territorial subdivision authority. However, in certain critical areas, urban services and standards may be applied.

Compatible Zoning Districts

The A-R Agricultural Residential District may be considered compatible with the Rural Residential Expansion Area designation.

Permitted Uses and Other Standards

This designation allows for dwellings at a maximum average net density of one unit per acre.

All environmentally sensitive areas should be preserved as part of the subdivision platting process.

A density bonus may be awarded when 50% or more of the agricultural lands proposed for development are preserved in outlots or through easements or other restrictions. The preserved agricultural land shall also remain in the Agriculture and Farm Service designation or be amended to the Agriculture and Farm Service designation as part of the subdivision platting process. The preserved area shall provide a buffer to adjacent agricultural areas. The density bonus shall be awarded so that the development yield is equivalent to the maximum average net density of one unit per acre prior to the preservation of agricultural lands. Lot sizes may be reduced to a minimum of 10,000 square feet. A maximum density bonus of 20% of the number of lots permitted by the development yield, in addition to those allowed by the development yield, is allowed.

Following Iowa Department of Natural Resources requirements, minimum separation distances for dwellings and wells from open feedlots and confined animal feeding operations shall be maintained from existing operations. Appropriate buffers from other agricultural uses shall also be maintained.

At the discretion of the applicable city, annexation agreements and other tools may be utilized to ensure that new development is prepared for potential annexation in the future.

Urban infrastructure and subdivision standards, including for streets, wastewater treatment, and potable water distribution of sufficient size to support emergency services, may be required.

Common wastewater treatment systems meeting Iowa Department of Natural Resources standards are required, unless a development is required to meet urban infrastructure standards at the time of development.

Agreements that when the property is annexed to a city, the land developer and/or landowner shall be responsible for the full cost of abandoning the rural well and wastewater systems and connecting to urban infrastructure may be required.

Urban Growth

Description

These are areas identified by cities as where urban growth can be supported in the immediate, short-term. City infrastructure, street, and trail connections are available, or achievable with low-cost, incremental extensions. They are contiguous to existing urban development. While these areas may include readily serviceable tiers of larger growth areas, which may not be fully developed during the life of the plan, there may also be instances where individual properties abutting a city are included. These individual properties are considered appropriate to be annexed due to their immediate serviceability and to meet the needs of a growing City, compared to long-term prospects coordinated within larger planned growth areas.

Annexations

Require annexation before land is developed or further divided.

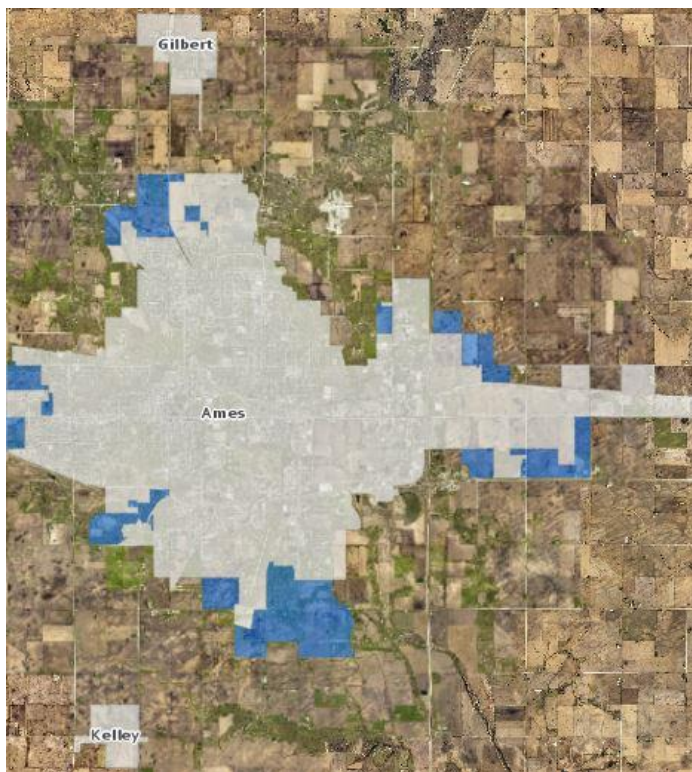


Figure 3: Draft Map of Urban Growth Areas

The annexation of individual properties not part of identified growth areas in a city's comprehensive plan, and exceeding 40 acres in size, shall be weighed against the growth areas, planned infrastructure investments in the areas, and their viability. Annexation may be justified due to readily available infrastructure, a large master-planned community approach with a development partner, or a lack of investment or development in identified growth areas and need for additional land development options.

Divisions

In these areas, the county agrees to waive the exercise of its review authority for divisions for new development lots.

Compatible Zoning Districts

Specific land uses planned for this area can be found in the applicable city comprehensive plan. Annexation is required prior to development.

Permitted Uses and Other Standards

Specific land uses planned for this area can be found in the applicable city comprehensive plan.

Development in the Urban Growth Area must provide infrastructure consistent with road, water, and sanitary sewer improvements required of development within the applicable city. This includes development with fire protection with water suppression systems and access requirements. It may also be required to meet city design standards, including for landscaping.

Where a base zoning district allows for a conditional use, Story County will consider the appropriateness of the use, recognizing the area is planned for urban densities and uses. Most conditional uses that are permissible in the County, due to their distance and isolation from other uses, will be presumed to not be compatible with planned urban development within a growth area. For example, shooting ranges, campgrounds, energy systems, etc.

Where conditional uses may be compatible with future urban land uses due to the particular nature of the use or its location in the growth area, additional site development considerations shall be made, including a use's location on a site, lighting, buffering, landscaping, and setbacks. Conditions related to these considerations shall be applied to address future compatibility of the use with planned urban development. In some situations, it may be appropriate to have a limited duration of approval for such a use.

The following conditional uses are not considered compatible with the Urban Growth Area:

- Shooting ranges
- Campgrounds and RV parks, except as part of a county park
- Lodges and fraternal organizations
- Power plants and substations
- Drag strips and other similar courses or tracks
- Salvage yards
- Yard waste composting
- Agricultural lime storage and processing operations
- Bed and breakfasts
- Landfills
- Commercial Wind Energy Conversion Systems or Solar Energy Conversion Systems
- Adult uses
- Surface mineral extraction and processing
- Indoor recreational facilities

The following conditional uses may be considered compatible with the Urban Growth Area, with review by the applicable city:

- Communication towers and facilities
- Commercial nurseries and greenhouses, including retail sales
- Golf courses
- Human service uses
- Home businesses
- Childcare centers

- Public buildings, water supply, and sewage treatment facilities
- Houses of worship and other similar uses
- Home businesses
- Adaptive reuse

Urban Reserve Overlay

Description

These are areas within a city's urban service area, where municipal services, most notably sanitary sewer, can be feasibly extended. They may be portions of larger urban growth areas or other areas where city growth may occur in the long-term, past the planning horizon of the Ames Urban Fringe Plan. However, the areas do not currently have city infrastructure available and are not priorities for urban growth. To ensure orderly, efficient city growth in the long-term, the Urban Reserve Overlay prevents premature development of rural residential subdivisions, rural commercial development, or other uses that may impede urban growth due to lot sizes, rural infrastructure, or the nature of a use. If infrastructure becomes available during the life of the plan, these areas may be annexed.

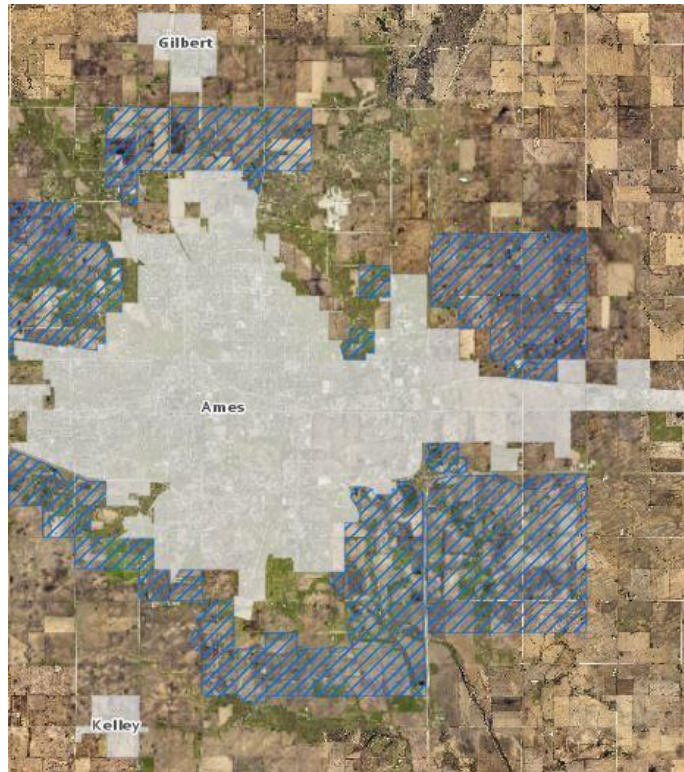


Figure 4: Draft Map of the Urban Reserve Overlay

Annexations

Require annexation by the city before land is developed or further subdivided.

Ensure that annexation is coordinated with the timely and efficient provision of adequate public facilities and services. Annexation shall be permitted in the following situations:

- Infrastructure is available or available with extensions of existing lines under ½ mile or shall be committed to be extended through the city's Capital Improvement Plan or through developer committed funds.
- Infrastructure extensions should be logical and beneficial to overall goals for the growth of an area and not just for the convenience of one development project.
- Existing street network or spine trails shall be accessible or available through extensions.

Divisions

Divisions for the creation of new development lots are not permitted.

In these areas, cities agree to waive the exercise of their extra-territorial subdivision authority. The allowance for divisions of 35 net-acre parcels in the Agriculture and Farm Service designation does not apply. Dwellings in this designation are limited to existing homes, new dwellings built on legally established lots of record or parcels 35 net acres or greater in size.

Compatible Zoning Districts

The A-2 Agribusiness District is not considered compatible with the Agriculture and Farm Service designation. Further, annexation is required prior to development.

Permitted Uses and Other Standards

Development in the Urban Reserve Overlay may be required to include provision of infrastructure consistent with road, water, and sanitary sewer improvements required of development within the applicable city. This includes development with fire protection with water suppression systems and access requirements. It may also be required to meet city design standards, including for landscaping and streets.

When the applicable city does not require urban standards, then the development may be required to include temporary common wastewater collection systems that meet Iowa Department of Natural Resources and city specifications, and temporary common water distribution systems, such as wells or rural water services. An agreement shall also be required that if and when the property is annexed to a city, the land developer and/or landowner shall be responsible for the full cost of abandoning the rural well and wastewater systems and connecting to urban infrastructure.

Where a base zoning district allows for a conditional use, Story County will consider the long-term appropriateness of the use recognizing the area is planned for urban densities and uses. Most conditional uses that are permissible in the County, due to their distance and isolation from other uses, will be presumed to not be compatible with planned urban development within a growth area. For example, shooting ranges, campgrounds, energy systems, etc.

Where conditional uses may be compatible with future urban land uses due to the particular nature of the use or its location in the growth area, additional site development considerations shall be made, including a use's location on a site, lighting, buffering, landscaping, and setbacks. Conditions related to these considerations shall be applied to address future compatibility of the use with planned urban development. In some situations, it may be appropriate to have a limited duration of approval for such a use.

The following conditional uses are not considered compatible with the Urban Reserve Overlay:

- Shooting ranges
- Campgrounds and RV parks, except as part of a county park
- Lodges and fraternal organizations
- Power plants and substations
- Drag strips and other similar courses or tracks
- Salvage yards
- Yard waste composting
- Agricultural lime storage and processing operations
- Bed and breakfasts
- Landfills
- Commercial Wind Energy Conversion Systems or Solar Energy Conversion Systems

- Adult uses
- Surface mineral extraction and processing
- Indoor recreational facilities

The following conditional uses may be considered compatible with the Urban Reserve Overlay Growth Area, with review by the applicable city:

- Communication towers and facilities
- Commercial nurseries and greenhouses, including retail sales
- Golf courses
- Human service uses
- Home businesses
- Childcare centers
- Public buildings, water supply, and sewage treatment facilities
- Houses of worship and other similar uses
- Home businesses
- Adaptive reuse

Environmentally Sensitive Overlay

Description

These areas include floodplains, steep slopes, wetlands, stream and river corridors, waterbodies, and other environmentally sensitive areas including prairies, savannas, and wildlife corridors. The mapped designation also reflects larger features or areas that were identified through use of GIS data sets and visual inspection of aerial photography. They may include existing development within the sensitive areas. Not all environmentally sensitive areas are mapped and individual developments will need to consider site-specific characteristics of any sensitive areas, regardless of whether the overlay applies to the site.

Annexations

The standards of the underlying designation shall apply.

Divisions

The subdivision authority of the respective jurisdictions will be the same as the underlying land use designation. However, divisions for the creation of new developments lots are not permitted unless the division, if permitted by the underlying designation, separates and/or otherwise protects the environmentally sensitive area from the development. Divisions that create lots that can only be accessed through environmentally sensitive areas are not permitted.

Compatible Zoning Districts

The standards of the underlying designation shall apply.

Permitted Uses and Other Standards

Further development is discouraged unless it enhances the environmentally sensitive area's function through restoration and/or preservation.

Any permitted development shall meet Story County's standards for mitigating impacts to environmentally sensitive areas.

Impacts of development contiguous to the Environmentally Sensitive Overlay should be considered as part of a development application and mitigated with the development.

Conditional uses shall follow the standards of the underlying designation

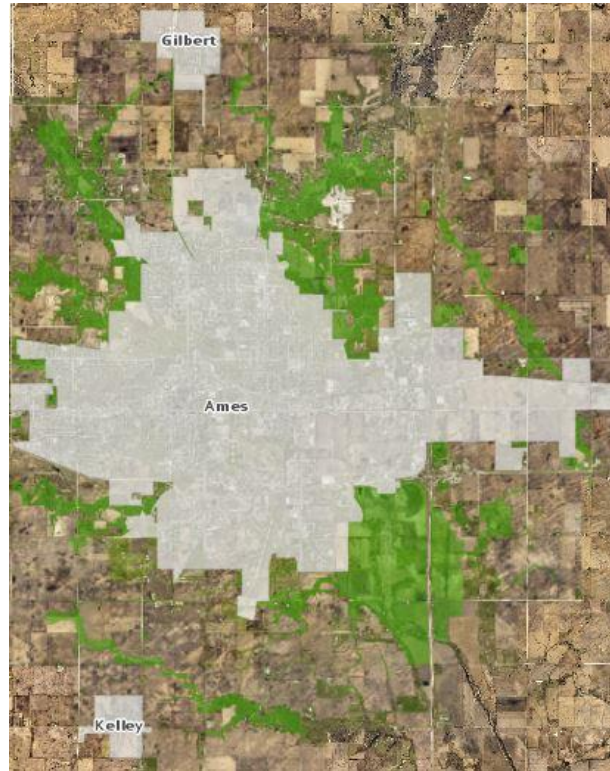


Figure 5: Draft Map of the Environmentally Sensitive Overlay

Subsurface Mining Overlay

Description

This overlay includes areas where underground mining operations, including ancillary surface operations, are occurring.

Annexations

The standards of the underlying designation shall apply.

Compatible Zoning Districts

The standards of the underlying designation shall apply.

Divisions

The subdivision authority of the underlying jurisdiction will be the same as the underlying land use designation.

Compatible Zoning Districts

The standards of the underlying designation shall apply.

Permitted Uses and Other Standards

Consider and mitigate the impacts of noise, dust, vibration, and traffic of mining operations when considering development applications in the vicinity.

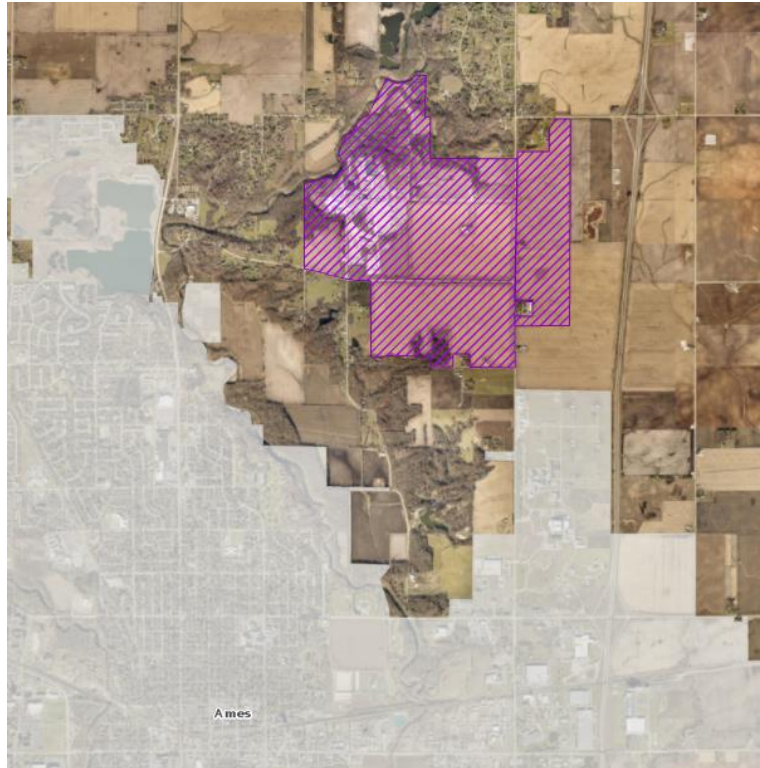


Figure 5: Draft Map of the Environmentally Sensitive Overlay

Airport Protection Overlay

Description

This land use designation is intended to reduce risk, increase safety and promote land use compatibility between the airport and adjacent land uses. It includes the airport clear zone and planned airport expansion areas.

Annexations

The standards of the underlying designation shall apply.

Divisions

The City of Ames retains jurisdiction of subdivisions within the overlay, regardless of the underlying designation.



Figure 6: Draft Map of Airport Protection Overlay

Compatible Zoning Districts

The standards of the underlying designation shall apply.

Permitted Uses and Other Standards

Consider the compatibility of airport operations with new development applications.

Story County agrees in this designation to route any permitting applications to the City of Ames Public Works Department and require FAA Determination of No Hazard prior to issuing permits.

Appendix A

Ames Urban Fringe Plan Draft Land Use Framework Map

Legend

- City Limits
- Environmentally Sensitive Overlay
- Airport Protection Overlay
- Urban Reserve Overlay
- Subsurface Mining Overlay
- Rural Residential--Expansion
- Rural Residential--Existing
- Agriculture and Farm Service
- Urban Growth
- Gilbert Urban Growth and Reserve Areas TBD

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